

HEAVY MENTAL

Golf can be a positively frustrating game if you let too many negative thoughts affect your score and enjoyment

It's amazing what the mind can think about during the couple seconds of a golf swing. And, if you're like many amateur players, those thoughts will often be negative, full of anxiety or leery about what might happen after you make contact with the ball.

If the saying about golf being played 90 percent from the neck up is true, then the mind really is a terrible thing to waste on the course.

Forgetting about past failures is hard, but those experiences should have nothing to do with the shot you're about to execute. Just like a cornerback in football who has been burned for a touchdown or a relief pitcher in baseball who has given up a home run, golfers need to move on and move forward.

With that in mind, here are some things to think about the next time you're on the course.

BE YOURSELF



Golf mimics life with its ups and downs and successes and failures. Your approach to the game and style of play should be consistent with how

you function best in the rest of your life. People who are fast paced and aggressive should play that way on the course, and people who are methodical and calculating should prepare a game plan to hit the fairways in that manner. By implementing that strategy you'll be more comfortable in the challenging situations that often pop up on the course.

Scott Heyn
PGA General Manager
Black Gold Golf Club

THINK ABOUT IT



Most golfers struggle with the mental part of the game because they focus too much on negative results. You can't block out your thoughts,

but you can choose to think positively. As I address the ball I look at the target twice. On the second glance I paint a positive picture in my mind, look back at the ball and immediately pull the trigger. Thoughts I have used before contact include making a smooth swing or hitting a fade off the corner of a bunker. As long as it's positive, anything goes.

Scott Wadkins
PGA Professional
ASU's Karsten Golf Course

AFTER THOUGHTS



A good post-shot routine is just as important as the pre-shot version. Players usually put the result of a shot into two categories – good and bad. You need

to either gain confidence from a shot or learn from it. If a shot turned out the way you wanted, remember what it looked and felt like so you can access that information on your next shot. If the result wasn't what you wanted, adjust your target on the next shot. These techniques will help you maintain your confidence and better manage your misses.

Chris Mayson
Director of Instruction
Maderas Golf Academy

MOVE FORWARD



You'll have many ups and downs during a round. What matters most is how you react to the poor results. After a bad shot that has mentally put you in a tough spot on the course, look at the next shot as a challenge and get excited for the opportunity to hit it. We're human and are going to make mistakes. Learning to react to the mistakes with positive thoughts is more productive than dwelling on the negative. Rise to the challenge, raise your mental focus and follow the bad shot with a great one!

Michelle Dubé
LPGA Master Teaching Professional
Tijeras Creek Golf Club

STAY POSITIVE



It's my belief that good golf begins with a positive attitude and positive visualization. But that's easier said than done, so here are some tips to help:

- Tell yourself that you can do it and really believe it.
 - Don't beat yourself up after a misfire; even pros hit bad shots.
 - Stay in the moment no matter how you're playing.
 - Always use a pre-shot routine.
- Golf is a game to be enjoyed with a positive attitude and realistic goals. Give it a try.

David Emerick
PGA Professional
The Crossings at Carlsbad

FREE AND EASY



Playing the game free of distractions and with the ability to concentrate on each shot allows us to have fun no matter the situation. Thoughts about swing mechanics, worrying about bad shots and not focusing on the task at hand can be scorecard killers. You need to picture a positive shot, rehearse the swing needed, aim and fire. Then repeat that throughout the round. It takes discipline to keep negative pictures and distracting thoughts out of your head, so utilizing this strategy will help you play more freely.

Dave Harmon
PGA Professional
Stevinson Ranch Golf Club

PICTURE THIS



The body and mind work together as a team, so knowing the layout of a course helps build confidence before a round. Top professional players often say that they rehearse each shot visually before actually stepping on the course, but pre-round preparation is often overlooked by most amateur golfers. Even if you're prepared physically, which is great, you still need to allow yourself enough time to be mentally prepared for what lies ahead before stepping up to the first tee.

Kris Brown
Director of Instruction
Trump National Golf Club, Los Angeles

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT



Famed UCLA basketball coach John Wooden often said that "success is the product of proper preparation." The same is true in golf. The next time you're on the course, think about your mental preparedness before each shot and be aware of your attitude and level of enjoyment. Are you still mad about the previous shot? If so, stay in the moment and be thankful that you're playing golf. An attitude check before each shot will have you feeling more relaxed and give you the chance to play your best.

D.J. Limardi, PGA
General Manager/Director of Golf
Sandpiper Golf Club
Rancho San Marcos

LOOKING BACK



It's important to keep your mind free of distractions during a round, but reflecting on your shots – good and bad – after a round can help you understand your game more clearly. Take inventory of your shots after a round to see if there's a consistent pattern. How many putts did you have? How many fairways and greens did you hit? Were most of your misses right, left, long or short? How was your course management and club selection? The answers to these questions will tell both a story of accomplishment and what you need to focus on during your next practice session on the range.

Eric Lohman
PGA General Manager
Monarch Beach Golf Links

TRUE BELIEVER



Too often we get down on ourselves for the way we're playing. Since what we say about ourselves is what we believe, it's important to think and say the right things. Treat yourself like your best friend. Be supportive, complimentary, understanding and patient. Tell yourself your game "is coming along nicely" or that the time you're spending on the range "is really starting to pay off." That sounds a heck of a lot better than "you're terrible" or "you'll never get this." If you don't believe in yourself, who will?

Michael Metz
Head Golf Professional
Lost Canyons Golf Club

TRANSITION GAME



It's difficult to take your game from the range to the course. That's mostly because you swing freely on the range because there are no hazards, out of bounds stakes or adverse consequences to errant shots. All you do is grab another ball and swing away. On the course you can't do that, so the next time you're on the range hit shots as if you're on the tee or in the fairway. Pick two points in the distance and hit your ball between them. The more you practice with a purpose the easier it will be to take your game to the course and execute all of the shots you've visualized and practice on the range.

Andrew Veysey
Head Professional
Raven Golf Club at Verrado

